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## A FORTUNE TELLER.

In her later years Mam Haney has given up family washing for the more profitable trade of fortune telling.

She lives in a small house on a back street. Next door are her daughter and a large family, but Mam prefers an independent establishment, where she can live in the privacy befitting a seeress. She is a dirty old woman, whose deep set eyes are permanently screwed up, from much peering into the darkness of the future.

One day Mrs. Curtis lost the gold thimble that had been her mother's. She valued it far beyond its intrinsic worth, and in her anxiety to recover it she resolved to consult Mam Haney. She had always looked on Mam as a disreputable old impostor, but she had heard wonderful tales of her skill.

"I'll give you 50 cents now," said Mrs. Curtis when she had explained her errand, "and if we find the thimble where you say I'll give you \$2 more."

"All right, lady. I kin find it sure," Mam answered with the confidence to which she owes half her success.

She went to her cook stove, raised a lid, poked the fire until it was glowing red; then spat thrice into the bed of coals, meanwhile mumbling a charm.

"I hope the judge will never hear of this," Mrs. Curtis thought as she sat with her skirts tucked up to avoid the greasy floor.

Mam's yellow face turned red in the heat before she lifted her head and spoke.

"I see a garding," she began, "an a light colored house and a lovely lady in the door." Two dollars would have made Medusa beautiful in Mam's eyes.

"I see the garding an the light colored house with green blinds. Begin in the garret and look to the cellar. Ef 'tain't there, go in the garding an dooryard an search from the north to the south an from the east to the west. Somewhere or ruther you'll find that ere thimble."

"Our house is light colored and has green blinds," said Mrs. Curtis musingly.

"Now, that's our us," Mam interrupted. "I dremember how your house looked, Mis' Curtis," which was very curious indeed, as she passed it every time she went down town. "Now, you jest look around your house an garding. Don't you never rest till you find that ere thimble," she counseled.

Mrs. Curtis went home. She and her "hired girl" searched the house from attic to cellar, while the children crawled about the yard, playing like snakes and incidentally catching heavy colds, but not finding the thimble for which they were looking.

She had quite given up and believed Mam Haney to be an old fraud, when Uncle Silas, digging a flower bed, brought up the thimble impaled on his fork. When the judge came home for dinner, she told him for the first time of her visit to the fortune teller and the advice he had given her.

The judge laughed incredulously. "Of course Mam knew that the probability were that the thimble was somewhere about the place," he said. "The old witch mixes more sense with her magic than I supposed. Are you going to pay her the \$2?"

"I did intend to, but if you think it was

just chance I guess I won't. I don't want to encourage impostors, and I suppose she would spend it for whisky, anyway."

In some devious way Mam Haney heard of the finding of the thimble. One morning she went to collect her debt. Mrs. Curtis told her that the thimble had been found by chance, that her magic had had nothing to do with its recovery.

"But I told you it was in the garding," Mam answered, "an you said you'd pay me \$2 if you found it. I'll get even with you yet!"

As it was a warm spring day, she went outside the fence and sat down on the horse block. Whenever one of the Curtis family came out of doors she screamed:

"Gimme that ere money. Mis' Curtis ain't no lady. She's cheatin a poor woman most 80." To every passerby she told her story and between times shouted maledictions on the house of Curtis.

When the judge came home, his wife told him to send the marshal to arrest her. "I guess you had better pay her that \$2, Fanny," he suggested.

"Never!" returned Mrs. Curtis. "Not if she sits there and screeches all summer."

Mam had returned to her post, when the judge came out of his door. She challenged him fearlessly.

He glanced around furtively, put his hand in his trousers pocket and brought out two silver dollars. He dropped them into one of Mam's long nailed claws.

"Now, clear out," he said, "and don't ever say any more about this affair."

But Mam sat still. As she clinked the dollars together in her hand a wicked thought came to her, and she laughed until her cheeks ached. She settled herself more comfortably. "Gimme that ere \$2!" she shrieked with new vigor as soon as the judge was out of sight. "You ain't no lady, Mis' Curtis."

During the afternoon Mrs. Curtis had callers. They politely ignored the persistent cry from the horse block, but she knew they would talk of it at the next house. She was tempted to tell her side of the story, but she was conscious she had not taken a very dignified stand, so kept silence. She tried to talk of the strawberry festival and the strange sickness of Mrs. Peters, but above all she could hear the voice of Mam Haney and see her surrounded by the small boys of the town.

It was almost 6 o'clock when she capitulated. That shrill old voice had shattered her obstinacy. She walked carelessly to the gate and held out a bill.

"So Mam left?" the judge said when he came home that evening.

"Not till about an hour ago, when I paid her," his wife answered in a voice of forced gaiety.

"Till you paid her?" echoed the judge.

"Yes. She was disgracing me before the whole town. I can never hold my head up again," she replied, giving way to her real feelings.

All that week he secretly congratulated himself on his reticence, which he considered masterly in a married man. He even went so far as to make a proverb after the fashion of Solomon, "A wise man keepeth his own counsel."—Odds and Ends.

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